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## **DISARMING CHARISMA? MAYORALTY, GENDER AND POWER IN MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA.**

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### ABSTRACT

The 'Urban Century' has seen a rise in power of cities, and the emergence of city mayors as significant political actors both nationally and globally. The power of city mayors, which unifies pragmatic, techno-managerial leadership with the authority and legitimacy of public office, invites a reappraisal of the gendered construction of power in the 'Urban Century', and the particular notions of hegemonic masculinity that city mayors recreate. This article explores the example of Medellín, Colombia, whose mayor Sergio Fajardo is widely regarded to have stewarded the city's rapid reduction in violence. Fajardo's leadership can be characterised as typical of the phenomenon of smart, cosmopolitan, charismatic mayors who are seen to respond professionally to local needs by making smart investment decisions and attracting international capital. The emergence of a techno-managerial mayor in the city of Medellín, which during the 1990s was the epicentre of Colombia's multi-faceted conflict with the highest homicide rate in the world, represents a fundamental change to the identity and gender of power in a context of violent conflict where legitimate authority in terms of a monopoly on the use of force, was fiercely disputed. I use this example to explore how mayoral power is gendered and how it relates to violence, which is central to liberal theories of leadership and the focus of the feminist critique of them. The possibility that such a character attain power indicates underlying changes in the gendered nature of political space,

including the institution of a Sub-Secretariat for Women and formalisation of participation in political process.

## INTRODUCTION

Many powerful players in Colombian politics have built their position on violence. The country's complicated internal conflict, involving an exclusive, reactionary elite with a tight grip on the limited formal power that exists, guerrillas, narco cartels and paramilitaries, produced leaders whose authority was in many cases defined by militaristic, violent machismo (Cockburn 2010; Viveros-Vigoya 2016). Guerrilla, paramilitary and formal political leaders have openly perpetuated a hyper-masculine, violent image, as well as paternalist symbols of command and authority. Although a number of Colombian Presidents have not embodied the explicitly vengeful, violent approach of President Alvaro Uribe, whose father had been murdered by the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* [FARC], the Colombian presidential office is marked by violence – whether assassination attempts, corruption scandals or collusion with paramilitaries. From the alleged psychosis of drug lord Pablo Escobar, to the 'firm hand, big heart' approach of Uribe, it would seem that, as Mao Zedong said, political power – be it formal or informal - in Colombia did 'grow out of the barrel of a gun'.

Unlike the presidency, the municipal office of mayor does not have responsibility for defence, and does not have the theoretical need to establish a monopoly on the use of force. In the 1990s a number of 'maverick' mayors emerged who seemed to break the mould of political power in Colombia. Mathematician and former Rector of the National University of Colombia, Bogota, Antanas Mockus – a self-confessed 'geek' with a penchant for the spectacular (Tognato, 2015) – donned a superhero cape and adopted an eccentric approach to political campaigning and policy. He went on to win the Bogota

mayoral election twice, in 1995 and 2001, and his innovative policies – including using mime artists to enforce traffic regulations - caught the public imagination, were effective, and his ludic, pedagogic approach to urban governance has been taken up and adapted around the world (Berney 2011).

In 2003, Medellín, historically Colombia's most violent city by far, also elected an academic mayor in the form of Sergio Fajardo, of the newly formed political party *Compromiso Ciudadano*. He had a PhD in maths, and, like Mockus, did not represent either of Colombia's two hegemonic political parties, the Liberals or the Conservatives. His relaxed, jeans-wearing charisma, as well as his creativity and technical expertise are said to have transformed Medellín to the extent that various commentators have seen him as a 'hero' of development (Peirce 2014; Fajardo and Bateman, 2014). Sergio Fajardo is held to have created the 'Medellín Miracle': the astonishing reduction of violence from 375 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1991 to 39 per 100,000 in 2013, that, it is claimed, is a result of the progressive policies of economic and urban development, known collectively as 'social urbanism' (Brand and Davila, 2011; Maclean 2015; Uran 2010).

To the outside world, Fajardo seems to fit this emerging model of charismatic mayors who are able to transform their cities. However, within Medellín, the 'Miracle' and Fajardo's role within it remain controversial. Social urbanism has been dismissed as a 'make-over' (Hylton 2007), which merely re-brands the city, and, more perniciously, as a 'paramilitary peace' an epithet which refers to the much criticised deals struck with paramilitary groups, who lack political status, in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes (Rozema 2008). It is frequently stated by those who are supportive and were even involved in the development of social urbanism that, rather than Fajardo's leadership, the transformation of political institutions, social

discourse, infrastructure and economy of Medellín were the necessary conditions for the transformation of the city and for the emergence of a leader like Fajardo (Maclean 2015).

It is not only in Colombia that mayors have attained political prominence. Due to the urbanisation of global population and capital, and the consequent rise in power of cities vis a vis nation states, urban governance and leadership has become a distinctive political practice, characterised by a techno-managerial, 'non-ideological' approach. From Rudy Giuliani in New York to Klaus Wowereit in Berlin, city mayors have been lauded as the new rulers in a 21<sup>st</sup> century globalised world; rulers that can best respond to the needs of their city and allow it to compete internationally for investment, mega-events and tourists (Barber 2013). However, the rise of mayors also corresponds to the decline in importance of the nation state, and it may be that, far from implementing a technical fix to local issues, mayors are forced to attract transnational capital in an ever more competitive global market place, which leads to pressure to reduce the tax base, to the accompanying detriment of public services and social rights (Curtis 2016; Swyngedouw 2011). However, although the prominence of cities as hubs of techno-managerial power is a consistent phenomenon around the world, these policies and approaches have distinct impacts, not only in terms of their implementation, but also in terms of the way that engagement with international discourses, scrutiny and institutions of governance recreate and challenge political process on the ground (Dean 2009).

Whether the rise of city mayors is seen as a triumph for local governance or as a post-political resignation to the power of global capital, the power that mayors wield as leaders is not fully accounted for by feminist theories of governance which have focussed on the nation state (e.g. Arendt 1970; Pateman 1988), or accounts of gendered

leadership in contexts – for example business and management - where the role does not carry with it the political, historical or cultural power of public office (e.g. Fotaki 2013). There is work on ‘women mayors’, that ranges from studies of electoral behaviour (Ferreira and Gyourko 2014) to women’s experiences in this role (Tremaine 2000), but a critical, gendered analysis of the construction of power and authority at the city scale is yet to be developed. Processes of power have changed over the period that has seen the emergence of significant city mayors, and, in addition to the structural and economic developments which have underpinned this, local configurations of power, violence and gender has transformed, opening up space for different tropes of gendered leadership at city level.

In this article I analyse how Sergio Fajardo’s ascension to and exercise of power, indicate and create changes in the gendered construction of leadership and political space, and changes in hegemonic gendered practice. I will explore the gendered construction of techno-managerial leadership and related changes in the relationship between violence and power. My argument builds on the idea that both leadership and violence are inherently gendered, and, specifically, definitive of hegemonic masculinity (Cockburn 2010; Munck 2008), in liberal political systems in which formal political leadership is defined as having a monopoly on the use of force. Urban governance and the authority of city mayors, in unifying pragmatic, techno-managerial leadership with the authority and legitimacy of public office, invites a reappraisal of the gendered construction of power in the ‘Urban Century’, and the particular notions of hegemonic masculinity that city mayors recreate.

This article first looks at how the concepts of violence, power, leadership and gender have been constructed and create, in general terms, a world in which most leaders are men and most violence is perpetrated by men. This conceptual debate is then grounded

in the Colombian context with a discussion of leaders from all sides of the country's complex violent conflict. I then discuss whether Fajardo's leadership can be seen as representing changes in hegemonic masculinity and the gendered construction of political space – the institutions, and social and political practices that frame how power is attained and exercised. Gendered values that construct the entwined notions of violence, masculinity and power have developed into a trope of political leadership that appears to have challenged the militaristic masculinities that have historically dominated politics, both formal and informal, in Colombia. In particular, the growth of the women's movement, and its ability to develop a space within formal mechanisms of power over this period, contested the masculine construction of power.

This article is based on interviews and focus groups conducted over two field visits to Medellín in 2011 and 2012, with an extended period of fieldwork in July and August of 2012. The fieldwork period in 2012 included thirty interviews and seven focus groups held with leaders from the city's political and business elites, social movements and community organisations who were involved in the political changes instigated by the recognition that violence was at crisis point in 1991. It also included visits to programmes to support income generation, co-operatives and various educational and cultural projects run by the Mayorality, universities and businesses there. Documents from the period in question, including reports generated by investigations into the violence at local, national and international level, as well as press coverage, were also analysed.

#### GENDER, POWER AND LEADERSHIP

The leaders that emerge in a particular political setting are a product of the institutional and discursive context which frames how power is obtained. Contrary to the idea,

underpinned by social contract theory, that violence emerges in a 'power vacuum', if the way for, , 'one actor within a social relationship [to] be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance' (Weber 1978: 53) is to employ violence, then violent leaders will emerge. A context in which aims are achieved by collaboration, mediated not only by checks and balances, but the values and norms around appropriate behaviour and the cultural construction of power, will be reflected in the skills and approach of leaders. However, leaders themselves and the discourses of leadership do not sit outside of these dynamics. Leadership is performative – the way the characteristics of those who have power are portrayed, can alter the cultural construction of power. As such, the micro enactments of leadership – the utterances, body language etc – are an important aspect of gaining and maintaining power and influence (Fotaki 2013).

The discourse of a leader who requires a monopoly on the use of force, with its roots in the social contract tradition (Houghton 2010), itself frames the values and characteristics which are associated with leadership. Liberal theories of power are critiqued for their individualistic, masculine bias rooted in the state of nature, in which caring roles, co-operation and collaboration are erased (Pateman 1988). These 'horizontal' forms of power - 'power with' rather than 'power over' (Houghton 2010) - have hence been absent from analyses of the causes of and pre-conditions for violence (Arendt 1970) and represent a theorisation of power and leadership that is not predicated on violence. An explicitly violent Leviathan is associated specifically with the pre-societal state of nature, but the 'strong man' trope of leadership which it evokes has resonance beyond formal political office,, and remains a powerful regulatory fiction entwined with hegemonic masculinity. The cultural coding of 'technical' knowledge and expertise as masculine, recreates vertical notions of power, and relies on placing emotional knowledge, oral cultures and traditional knowledge systems into alterity



(Nussbaum 2003). This maintains the vertical relationship of power and control, albeit in the form of expertise rather than strength.

The values that leaders are thought to embody are defined in opposition to feminine characteristics of care, collaboration and emotion, which need to be renounced – not just repressed – to achieve ‘greatness’ (Bologh 2009). The notion of a leader, both in terms of legitimacy and charisma, has been so associated with masculinity, that women in leadership roles are arguably in an inherently contradictory position, (Clare 2002).

These gendered binaries are found in Freud’s work on the masculine ‘heroic ethic’ and the feminine ‘ethics of the subjugated’. He argues that civilisation itself depends on the renunciation of the caring leader, and that men must strive to achieve whilst women are condemned to constantly seek; the sociality and morality that define civilisation are achieved by men renouncing their ‘natural’ aggression towards fathers, sons and brothers – out of fear of a patriarch and need to collaborate with other men (Bologh 2009). In this formulation, the concepts of power, violence and masculinity are co-constitutive. As Ehrenreich states, reflecting Cockburn’s (2010) argument that gender relations are causal in war ‘it is not only that men make wars, but that wars make men’ (cited in Munck 2008: 8). The inherent masculinity of leadership, and leadership’s inherent association with force and the threat of violence, has deep roots, politically and psycho-analytically.

The subordination of femininity is a defining element of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Schippers 2007) which is maintained by dominating and marginalising other masculinities as well as women. Hegemonic masculinity is the gender practice which, ‘when embodied by at least some men over time and space, legitimates men’s domination over women as a social group’ (Schippers 2007: 87). The coding of strength, violence, promiscuity, reason, logic and authority as masculine traits,

and the institutions which presuppose and recreate these assumptions, legitimate men's power over women, and construct the tropes of masculinity that do not conform to these ideals as inadequate, and feminine. The idea of hegemonic masculinity has been critiqued on the grounds that it assumes monolithic ideas of masculinity which remain in effect predicated on violence, and fails to take into account positive masculine traits, geographical variation of masculinities, or the political, social, economical and cultural context of how masculinity and power are co-constructed (Collier and Hall, 2000; Kirby and Henry, 2012). In postulating certain patterns of gendered behaviour as being hierarchical and hegemonic, the discursive contradictions, and the fluidity and complex patterns of behaviour that are actually adopted by individuals, are over-simplified (Gutmann and Viveros Vigoya 2005; Schippers 2007). Masculinity and femininity exist as a repertoire of behaviours, which pertains of contradictions and fluidities, and which, in being performed, recreates the gendered structures that maintain masculine hegemony and the subordination and marginalisation of women and 'other' masculinities (Butler 2011).

Gender practice is hence necessarily relational and contextual, and hegemonic masculinity needs to be understood in place, where the construction of the legitimization of masculine authority can be analysed in terms of the complex social relations, discourses and institutions which are involved in recreating gender relations in context. Liberal analyses of power and governance in Colombia are predicated on both the 'strong man', and the technocratic forms of leadership. Colombia has witnessed, over the late twentieth century, an evolution of its political landscape, which reflects, in accordance with its designation as a 'consolidating democracy', the liberal progression from violent conflict and weak, unextended formal institutions of government, to a constitutional democracy (Bejarano and Leongómez 2002). Liberal analyses of Colombia's conflict focus on the absence of formal powers, and these analyses are

influential not only in the solutions that are explicitly indicated, but also in recreating the discourses framing how formal political leaders and institutions are recognised. The argument is that formal institutions, dominated by Colombia's divided elite, have lacked the coherence, capacity, extension and, arguably, will, to provide security to its citizens, and the ability to suppress para-state actors, such as the FARC, gaining power in their absence by providing social as well as civil security (Denissen 2010). However, this position in casting the situation as a vacuum, overlooks state institutions' role in perpetuating violence (Justino et al 2013) and ignores the existing power dynamics that are in play, including gender dynamics, that shape who can acquire power and how it is exercised.

Parallel to liberal analyses that see a monopoly on the use of force as a necessary condition for legitimate formal power, in the late-modern era, governance, particularly at the city-scale, has become associated with technocratic rule. With this development, the characterisation of legitimate power, and therefore leadership, is bureaucratic and technocratic, but still bears the characteristics of individualism, verticality and dominance that have their roots in contract theory (Haughton et al 2013). 'Good governance' is defined in terms of rational economic policy, and violence is seen as a criminal matter to be dealt with legally rather than a political issue. Even in violent areas, there is faith among the international community that market development is a key factor in establishing peace, and this has been prominent in analyses of the Medellín Miracle (e.g. World Bank 2015). Such forms of political power are also coded masculine, as the vertical power of the Leviathan is replaced with the vertical power of the expert. This transition potentially represents changing hegemonic gender practice with regards to political office, that reflects changes in gendered political space, agency and leadership.

## POWER, LEADERSHIP AND MASCULINITY IN COLOMBIA

A survey of prominent leaders involved in Colombia's long-running armed conflict indicates various configurations of gendered practice that constitute hegemonic masculinity and reflect the country's complex political conflict, colonial history, high levels of inequality and highly diverse cultural and political landscape. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, various factions have been involved in the violent conflict, which encompasses the long-standing elite feud between Conservatives and Liberals, the conflict with the FARC and related left-wing guerrilla, paramilitary violence, narco-cartels, and criminal gangs.

Leaders in the formal political arena have explicitly drawn on paternalist discourses to justify their power and authority. Elite leaders in Colombia justify their exclusive grip on formal power in terms of the need for stewardship. Elite networking groups – known as *rosca*s – and the domination of family ties in politics and business have ensured that formal political power remains exclusive territory. The 'National Front', an elite power-sharing agreement that held between 1958 and 1974 in which liberals and conservatives alternated in power, maintained stability at the centre, but also perpetuated exclusion and minimised participation, perpetuating key underlying causes of Colombia's conflicts. At city level, mayors were not elected by popular vote until 1986, before which time they were appointed (Davila 2009). This lack of citizen participation and voice, led to a paternalist style of top down government. Formal political leaders would gain support by establishing vertical, *padrino* (godfather) style, clientelist relationships with people in communities, offering individual favours in return for votes (Ceballos Melguizo and Cronshaw 2001). The paternalism of formal, Cartel and paramilitary forces also took the form of exchange of investment or favours for support. The similarities in leadership styles between formal and informal powers,

and collusion between them – an example being Uribe’s legalisation of paramilitary activity - demonstrates that so-called formal powers do not have legitimacy or a monopoly on the use of force (Ceballos Melguizo and Cronshaw 2001).

Paramilitary leaders, like formal forces, justify violence in terms of the need to provide security, and they were established to protect the wealthy elite (Carroll 2011). The brothers Carlos, Fidel and Vicente Castaño, whose father, like Uribe’s, was also kidnapped and murdered by the FARC, led a number of paramilitary organisations in Medellín, including the conglomeration of paramilitary groups, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*. Their use of discourses of the ‘strong-man’, and its Spanish equivalent *caudillo*, to justify their violence and power is perspicuous– Fidel’s *nom de guerre* was ‘Rambo’. In contrast to guerrilla groups, the number of women participating in paramilitary organisations is extremely low, with many groups having none (Gutierrez-Sanin 2008), and paramilitary groups distinguish themselves and justify their actions on the grounds of ‘promoting masculine values of courage and honour, and relying on retaliation to resolve conflict’ (Romero 2000: 53).

The leaders of the Cartels are consistently hyper-masculine and militaristic, but, in particular in the case of Pablo Escobar, they disrupted, violently and symbolically, elite spaces of rule and leadership (Theidon 2009). In contrast to the rhetoric used in reference to paramilitary organisations, and elites, the tone of autobiographical accounts that have emerged from members of the Medellín cartel and Pablo’s inner circle, ‘serve to pit “manly” thugs...against what emerges as a “sissified” elite.’ (Pobutsky 2013: 688). Pablo Escobar was from a family of modest means, and was one of a number of drug-traffickers in Latin America who were able to gain political power due to their vast wealth; in 1982 he was elected to the Colombian Congress. Escobar was seen as a ‘barbarian ... crashing through the gates of country clubs and presidential

palaces, to the horror of the well-bred few' (Casas-Zamora 2010: 58). Indeed, in one tale that has entered into the folklore of Medellín, Pablo, at the height of his wealth was turned away from the country club in the most exclusive neighbourhood in the city, as one cultural worker explained to me in interview, 'because of bad taste rather than any association with criminality'. (Trades Guilds Representatives, Focus Group, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

Those involved in the debates on the causes of violence in Medellín in the early 1990s emphasise the relevance of a culture of masculinity that valued a competitive individual who would maximise personal gain at all costs. As one member of the 2012 Mayoral administration summarised 'We, the Antioqueños have a problem, and it's that we do not have an associative culture. We are 100% individualists' (Interview, Member of Gaviria Administration, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012). The competitive underpinnings of this individualism can be summed up with the word 'tumba'o' [swagger], as one woman councillor in Medellín summarised to me in interview:

This is a 'swagger' [tumba'o] culture. Tumba'o means that I've toppled you, I win, I'm the most important, and if you don't know that it was me that did it, even better....He is the man, that's how Pablo worked. That's how he got what he got, because he was determined to beat everyone else. *Ese es el macho, ese es Pablo Escobar*. (Medellín Councillor, Interview, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

This also illustrates the value accorded to the characteristic of being 'vivo' - a vivacious, sharp, wily character who would have the wit to play the system and take advantage of others' naivety (Ziederman 2016), exemplified by the axiom, thought to be said by mothers to their sons, 'get money son – get it honourably – and if you can't get it honourably get it anyway'.

However, 'vivo', competitive, 'tumba'o' culture is also applied to formal politics, where, the pressure 'to be the man' is as intense as in excluded communities. Antioquia, the department of which Medellín is the capital, is known for being the most industrial, industrious, entrepreneurial and competitive region. As one business leader proudly confirmed, 'we've got Antioquians in the Sahara renting out camels' (Interview, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012). In a focus group discussion at a Medellín business school, the challenges which this presents were made clear:

It's a cultural issue in which both the entrepreneur and the *Paisa* [person from Antioquia] are very untrusting and individualist characters.... In our experience, any attempt at setting up associations has to start from the way people think, and from their social culture. (Focus Group, Business School, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

The potential overlap between the competitive, individualist Antioqueñan business leader and the culture of criminality is often noted. In the words of one sociologist who was involved in developing social urbanism, with reference to the competitive, individualist swagger common across class divides, 'In this sense elite culture as well as the culture of narco-traffic were both typical Antioquian cultures.' (Academic and NGO Activist, Interview, August 7<sup>th</sup> 2012).

In contrast, work on the experience of men and women fighters in the guerrilla movement has found that class consciousness and comradeship opened up more space for women to participate and challenge traditional notions of femininity that underpin hegemonic masculinity (Dietrich Ortega 2012). There are a significant number of women in leftist guerrilla organisations in Colombia. Although figures are difficult to

ascertain, evidence suggests that women form almost 30% of the FARC *Secretariado* – (leadership units), and almost 20% of the rank and file (Gutierrez-Sanin 2008: 10).

Although women may be carrying out traditionally feminine roles, for example care and administrative work, it has been argued that the ethos of solidarity and the emphasis on merit and capability has allowed women to challenge stereotypical ideas of their abilities and create new ideals of femininity (Herrera and Porch 2008). Dietrich Ortega (2012) describes how rural women were held in esteem by their male counterparts in the leftist 19<sup>th</sup> of April movement - M19 – because of their superior strength, and were hence able to take on valued political and military positions. However, the ‘masculine culture’, in particular with regards to violence and sexual morality, continues to dominate and restrict the potential for the development of non-hegemonic gender practice (Herrera and Porch 2008).

Colombian politics shows an increasing rate of women’s participation in formal politicals, although from a very low starting point (IPU 2016). As presidential candidate Aida Avella observed, ‘Colombia is a country which has always been handled by men,’ (Colombia Reports 2014) and the women that do participate tend to be from an elite, white background, reflecting the historical development of formal political institutions in Colombia. Nevertheless, women’s social movements and grassroots, community organisations, which are more inclusive in terms of race and socio-economic status, have had a prominent role in Colombia’s transition to democracy and peace, and the inclusion of social movements in democratic decision making is stated in the constitution of 1991 (Browitt 2001). Women’s organisations have campaigned to highlight not only the gendered nature of the country’s armed actors, but also the extremely high rates of violence against women perpetrated throughout the armed conflict in Colombia (Viveros-Vigoya 2016). Masculine authority across these violent groups is predicated on the control of women, and this is part of a broader patriarchal



culture which women's groups stress is part of the same violent landscape (Cockburn 2010). As one feminist politician summarised: 'What we have here is a situation in which the FARC, the military, the paramilitaries and the Cartels all agree that abortion is immoral' (informal communication, October 2011).

Women and women's organisations were initially conspicuous in their absence from the most recent round of peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC.

Nevertheless, over the duration of the talks, women's participation increased, not only in the team of negotiators themselves, but also in terms of the groups consulted, reports commissioned, and the growing recognition that gender was central to the peace talks (Bouvier 2016). Reports on transition processes in Colombia and elsewhere emphasise that post-conflict transition is an opportunity to renegotiate gender relations, and in particular change hegemonic practice in such a way that violence, control, dominance and retaliation are not part of political process, or the everyday (Bouvier 2016).

Transition is a political historical moment in which power is in flux, and political, discursive space can open up in the mêlée and confluence of various, hegemonic and non-hegemonic gendered practices, for progressive masculinities and femininities to gain power; and progressive forces in terms of gendered practice have always been present. Whilst the men who gained leadership in Colombia's main warring factions maintained power by adopting patterns of behaviour and symbols associated with violence and domination, progressive gender practice can also be encountered in the many organisations that are resistant to these forces. To illustrate, Hector Abad, whose father, a human rights campaigner, was murdered in 1987, is described as, referring to his upbringing with five sisters, being 'grateful to have been brought up without machismo, in a society where conflicts are often solved with weapons....When you're surrounded by women, "you understand that being macho, or using the privilege of males, is ridiculous"' (The Daily Beast 2012).

In the face of all the other factors contributing to Colombia's violence, the long running conflicts, availability of arms, and the resources to sustain the different factions in the form of narco-money, it is simplistic to ascribe violence to cultural factors.

Nevertheless, as Pécaut argues, it is possible to observe a culture of violence in Medellín; a situation in which violence had entered everyday negotiations, deliberations and actions to the point that it had become, in Arendtian terms, banal (Pécaut 1999). To illustrate, one feminist activist working in the Sub-Secretariat for Women remembers:

I saw people killed in my area. But besides the personal impact which is caused when they kill someone in front of you, [the most impactful] was the attitude of the children. They would go up and down the street on their bikes, pass by on the other side of the street where the killing had taken place and looked on with curiosity. I always asked myself, what would the life of those children be like who had started to see death as something so normal? (NGO Activist, Interview, August 2012)

#### FAJARDO, LEADERSHIP AND MASCULINITY

In this section I look at how Fajardo's leadership relates to and recreates the gendered political, institutional and discursive changes which have taken place in Colombia over the last thirty years. Fajardo led the party Compromiso Ciudadano from 2000. Although outside Colombia he is seen as the face of social urbanism and the 'hero' of the city's development, within Medellín, those involved in the city's development stress the importance of contextualising social urbanism and Fajardo's mayorship in the political and economic changes which the city had undergone since the late 1980s. Contrary to press reports that describe Fajardo as the 'founder' of Compromiso Ciudadano, (e.g. Peirce 2014; New York Times 2007), the party was initially a civic movement that grew

out of the concerted effort in Medellín to diagnose the causes of the violence and propose 'Future Alternatives' for the city. The formation of Working Groups, Seminars and Strategic Plans followed the appointment of a Special Presidential Advisor to Medellín, María Emma Mejía in 1990, and significant investment in the city, when its homicide rate was almost at its peak (Maclean 2015).

Compromiso took the decision to form a political party and seek a leader in the late 1990s. They approached Sergio Fajardo, who agreed to be their candidate in the mayoral elections of 2000. It was felt that Fajardo had the cultural capital among elites to be accepted, whilst also representing a change in approach. As one woman who served in his administration summarised: 'He's a man who moves among the elites, but who is also capable of moving from below...He's an academic mathematician who had never been political, but he is a total idealist.' (Member of Fajardo Administration, Interview, 8th August 2012). She however went on to emphasise the importance of the political context in understanding Fajardo's leadership: 'He arrived at the mayorship, in my opinion, as a result of the previous 10 or 12 years.'

Structural changes – most notably legislation allowing for the popular election of mayors (Acto Legislativo 001) in 1986, and the new constitution in 1991 - facilitated the development of civic engagement and a more collaborative, participatory approach to politics. A civil servant responsible for participation in the mayoralty, summarised it thus:

The Constitution of 91 breaks with two things: it breaks with the nature of political participation and the concept of power. Before 91 participation in Colombia was subversive and was generally assigned to the left, to being a guerrilla, to organisations that were against the state. But then in 1991,

participation appears in the constitution as a right. (Focus Group, Sub-Secretariat for Participation, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

When Compromiso Ciudadano took the decision to change from a civic movement to a political party, they sought out a leader who would represent these values and unite the city's various political factions in order to make their agenda politically feasible.

Fajardo's style of governance hence reflects and recreates the city's changing politics, including the gendered politics of how leadership is established, retained and perceived.

### Techno-managerial leadership

With a PhD in maths, Fajardo could be expected to exemplify the technocratic leader, and the managerial approach associated with the office of mayor. He has described himself as 'the candidate without a political ideology' (El Economista 2011), and under his administration, data gathering and transparency were foregrounded. The website *Medellín Como Vamos* [How We're Doing] was launched in 2006, with the aim of 'evaluating the changes in the quality of life in Medellín' by collating and publishing data on a range of indicators, including poverty, inequality, violence, environment and citizen participation. Two members of Fajardo's cabinet observed how Fajardo's use of data challenged, albeit with limited success, clientelist and populist approaches to politics:

Fajardo did not negotiate. Never. He had the figures, he didn't need to. If people objected he would present the numbers as a technical issue ...The majority of the time we're even favouring a population which never voted for us, so it's not like we're paying them back.... We used mathematical models to locate the materials, mathematical models of population density, the

human development index, the transport system. (Member of Fajardo Administration, Interview 17th July 2012)

Before, the resources were invested where the votes were. With Fajardo... they were invested where there was poverty. This was counter-intuitive, because that's not where Fajardo's votes were .... The most absurd and incredible thing is that in the following election, for Alonso [Fajardo's successor], those areas where there had been the biggest investment didn't vote for him, because the politicking still dominated. (Member of Fajardo Administration, Interview, 8th August 2012)

The emphasis on data was not solely the result of the mayor's preferred approach. The 1990s saw an emphasis on monitoring, evaluation and technocratic 'good governance' in the development agenda. Specifically in Medellín, the 1994 report by the Monitor organisation, 'Competitive Advantages for Medellín,' advocated replacing the exclusionary political economy based on family based businesses and elite social networks with more systematic, modern policies in order to attract foreign direct investment. The report observed 'stagnant and reactionary mind-sets can never lead the firms that are demanded by the new world order.' (Camara de Comercio n.d.: 28). Fajardo's leadership came at a time when business elites had reason to support changes in politics and leadership in the city. As a representative of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises explained:

We have gone from individualist leadership to collective leadership, and all of a sudden that is what is transforming this region. Since the 1990s there was interest in promoting new forms of leadership, and there was a push for this from big business... What has been demonstrated is that systems of

paternalist subsidy are reproducing poverty – and Medellín has a lot of that

(Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2012)

Nevertheless, despite the trajectory of change, the question of persisting poverty and clientelism in Medellín is a source of continuing debate, and indicates on the one hand the strength of technocratic governance in addressing elite power, and on the other its weaknesses in that it can further exclude communities who feel that their realities are not represented in the discourse of technocratic experts. To illustrate:

When the city of Medellín, from Fajardo's administration onwards, started to push proposals of social economy and solidarity, this didn't work. And why did that not work? Because it stayed in the hands of supposed experts who did not have the capacity to interpret reality; there are very few experts in the social and economic reality of the communities. (Focus Group, Community Leaders, July 24th 2012)

A technocratic approach to policy development and implementation has been criticised, at both the theoretical level and the practical level, for imposing a form of governance that is generally associated with the colonial, masculine, elite in the Latin American context (Taylor 2004; Auyero 2000).

Sergio got in because of the discourse of meritocracy. And in a meritocratic society, the elite always win – and why? I've got a masters from Cambridge, and you went to the University of the Sticks. (Cultural Workers Focus Group, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

Policies that are intended to be inclusive can also be seen as an imposition from an exclusive ruling elite. Fajardo's claim to have no political ideology recreates this false neutrality. Despite the compelling need to include marginalised neighbourhoods, the library named after its sponsors built in one of the poorest, most marginalised and most violent neighbourhoods, graphically exemplifies this dynamic. 'You know what Fajardo did? He built a spectacular library in a poor neighbourhood. You know what he called it? The King and Queen of Spain – that just tells you everything.' (Co-operatives leader, interview, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012). One member of the 2012 city administration who had been a political activist on the left throughout the 1990s, lamented the lack of class politics that has accompanied a technocratic approach to government

I'm still surprised not to find any traces of a discourse on class conflict.

There is no longer a discourse of radicalism, of anti-business from the working classes. Today, the discourse is about collaboration and to make alliances with big business leaders. (Member of Gaviria Administration, Interview 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012)

Fajardo's technocratic style puts a neutral gloss on these interventions, that have been criticised from within and beyond Medellín for being focussed on the priorities of international capital rather than the needs of communities. Reflecting Hylton's thesis that Medellín has had a 'makeover', one cultural leader described the libraries as 'silicon implants, but if you see the city from the inside, there's a different reality.' (Cultural Workers Focus Group, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2012). However, many of the architects involved, either directly in government or who consulted on these projects, appreciate what was achieved, whilst acknowledging the limitations:

The library parks are undoubtedly an important project from the cultural point of you, because it's not an apologetic vision – 'oh aren't they so poor, let's take photos of how they live.' But nevertheless, where is the citizenship in these projects? Not just in the physical spatial intervention, but also in the construction of a social fabric, where is it?' (University Architecture Department, Focus Group, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

Architects and urban planners emphasised the difference between the architects who had been involved in developing social urbanism and the iconic projects that have come to define it, and a more participatory, horizontal approach. This was identified as a more feminine approach to urban design. 'A participatory approach to urban design', stressed one architect 'is about seeing space from people's point of view, adopting their categories and understanding their mobility and use of space' (University Architecture Department, Focus Group, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

Technocratic leadership recreates a form of expertise that itself is coded masculine, and relies on the acquisition of cultural capital associated with elite privilege. Fajardo's technocratic style of leadership can firstly only be understood in the context of changing political dynamics – including global capital – that required this style. The technocratic approach represents a break from clientelist, 'tumba'o' framings of masculine power. To have academic experts in government, whose policies and decisions are based on data, represents and recreates a progressive change in processes of power that were imbued with violence and verticality. Fajardo, when questioned about his dealings with pre-existing powers in Medellín and the DDR process, insists that governing with expertise, rational explanation and a strong team were the only tools needed to maintain his authority (Conference, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017). However, his strategy of negotiating with paramilitary groups has been much criticised for integrating armed actors in such a way



that continued to rely on them to provide 'security', hence creating a 'perverse calm' in the city (Theidon 2007: 85).

This would suggest that the expertise that Fajardo foregrounds in his political discourse is not in fact hegemonic; his authority and ability to govern rests on negotiations with and reliance on men who have attained and exercise their power via violent means.

Areas which have been particularly praised for the innovative approach to regeneration and consequent reduction in violence in Medellín, were areas that had been 'pacified' by the national military under Uribe's presidency in *Operación Mariscal* and *Operación Orion* in 2002. Whilst some argue that this was the moment the 'Colombian government reasserted control over the Medellín neighbourhoods' (Drummond et al 2012), others point to the 'mass killings, displacement and forced disappearance of 130-300 people' that resulted from this military/paramilitary operation (Bernal-Franco and Navas-Caputo 2013: 7). Reflecting a number of comments, one prominent business leader described this operation as 'necessary' in order to implement the technical fixes. Other commentators stress the continued dominance of armed groups in excluded areas, arguing that violence has reduced because they have taken on the role of enforcing security (Hylton 2007). In this sense it could be seen that the office of mayor is offering a different gendered practice of leadership but without challenging the underlying notion that power depends on violence.

### Charisma

*"If Sergio Fajardo Valderrama, the dashing, denim-wearing mayor of Medellín, Colombia, does not come across as an average politician, that is because he is not... Mr Fajardo has brought a distinct air of change to a city that needed it desperately." (FDiIntelligence 2007)*

Fajardo is frequently referred to as 'charismatic,' and, in many ways, he fits the classical formulation of the 'charismatic' leader. He emerged in the context of a recognised crisis in the city, and is heralded internationally as the 'heroic' leader who was able to defeat the established duopoly of political parties, and implement a distinctive vision of the city in the form of his 'social urbanism' policies. He also fits the quotidian definition of 'charismatic' in that he was renowned as an excellent communicator who can engage with people of all backgrounds. The image that Fajardo portrays speaks to a globalised political stage in which individualist leadership is valued – and the construction of the 'maverick mayor' in US work on the subject is an example of this (Barber 2013). Within Medellín itself, the collaborative processes involved in the development of Compromiso Ciudadano are widely acknowledged, but Fajardo nevertheless represents a leadership style which is palatable to international discourse.

Despite the headlines implying that he single-handedly transformed the city, Fajardo himself, and the people who worked with him, emphasise the importance of the movement as a whole. As one academic who had been involved in the development of Compromiso Ciudadano summarised:

'The government platform on which he arrived, comprised a plurality of organisations. The strategic and political direction of the campaign didn't emphasise this, but the political programme did. The novelty of the government of Fajardo and of Compromiso Ciudadano was that it brought together all of this which had accumulated in the 1990s.... But initially Compromiso Ciudadano was much more collective, the second Compromiso turned much more around his personality.' (Academic and NGO Activist, Interview, August 7<sup>th</sup> 2012)

However, without negating the importance of the long-running organisation and campaigns which underpinned his leadership, Fajardo's personal social position and 'charisma' marshalled a confluence of powers and created a political space in which the policy ideas that made up social urbanism could be implemented, precisely because he could appeal to the image of a technocratic leader that Medellín's elites and businesses sought. His charisma was in effect a reassertion of elite masculinity and control, albeit a recreation of classed distinction which acknowledged the need for a modernising, cosmopolitan face to the world.

His performance of leadership indicates and recreates a change in gender relations vis a vis ideas of political command and leadership. To illustrate, the Medellín based newspaper *El Colombiano* (2012) covered Fajardo's wedding to his long-term partner with the headline 'Sergio Fajardo and Lucrecia got married in jeans'. Fajardo married Lucrecia Ramirez in the exclusive country club in the salubrious neighbourhood of El Poblado, the same country club that had famously denied entry to Pablo Escobar. As *El Colombiano* goes on to observe, 'the celebration had the same character as the politician: informal and fun'. The event represents an evolution away from the elite structures which so defined the inner political and business circles in the city during the time of the violence – the '*roscas*', or elite networks that underpin formal entrepreneurial and political activity in the country - and a reinforcement of them in a new, cosmopolitan context.

This also represents a break with traditional understandings of the political couple, with its implications of masculine 'headship' and a supportive wife. The 'political wife' has been theorised variously as the gendered other of masculine political power, an empowering fusion of personal and political, or as the most trusted political ally (Loizeau 2015). Lucrecia Ramirez, refused to be referred to as a 'First Lady', insisting on

the title 'First Woman of Medellín', on the grounds that she was 'no-one's adornment' (Semana 2006). She is a medical psychiatrist, professor at the National University of Antioquia, and a feminist. In her position as First Woman of Medellín, she decided, on the basis of consultations with women who had formerly had the role, to take an active and political approach to setting the agenda. She built on the work of the Working Group for Women, one of several working groups which over the 1990s had brought together representatives from NGOs, community groups, academics and business leaders to build the agenda that was eventually to define Compromiso Ciudadano and Social Urbanism. From 2002, she brought together various women's organisations to form a 'network of networks', and played a key role in establishing the Sub-Secretariat for Women in 2002.

Sergio Fajardo and Lucrecia Ramirez can be seen as an example of the 'coupledom' that became a norm in political partnerships over the 1990s. Starting with 'Billary' (Bill and Hillary Clinton), the image of the couple in public life is portrayed more as a partnership than the traditional man and wife. This formulation of the 'ideal relationship' is itself criticised as assuming middle/upper class, heterosexual norms. In its modern, cosmopolitan character, this form of relationship fits with the image that Medellín wanted to present to the world. Nevertheless, the way that they presented their marriage to the public, and the fact that Lucrecia Ramirez was able to play the active, feminist political role that she did, demonstrates the radical developments in gendered political space that had taken place over the 1990s.

I at least think that Fajardo has a strong sensibility on women's issues, something that is not usual among those in government. Educating girls, giving out condoms and all that was a complete scandal in Medellín.'

(Member of Fajardo Administration, Interview, 8th August 2012)

### The women's movement

*'If it wasn't for the women's movement, we'd have ended up with the same machos as before'* (NGO Activist, Interview, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2012)

The women's movement in Colombia is most associated with the peace movement. The organisations *Ruta Pacifica de la Mujer*, *Vamos Mujer* and *Mujeres que Crean*, conduct campaigns against violence, the importance of a gendered approach to the causes of violence, and the gendered nature and impacts of the violence. These organisations highlight that women have been the greatest number of those displaced, that sexual violence in the conflict is prevalent on all sides and that there are various factors in the country's overall development strategy that increase women's vulnerability to violence.

Members of Ruta Pacifica refer to feminism and pacifism as two "political bastions" (Cockburn 2010: 142) that frame their approach to violence as a continuum of gendered domination that is causal in war. The discursive and structural context of formal politics in the 1990s was conducive to this analysis, as the relationship between violence, exclusion, power and masculinity were explicitly under scrutiny. There is a distinction between 'autonomous' and 'political' organisations; the former are active in creating an autonomous space that is independent of the necessarily oppressive workings of the State, while the latter are prepared to work with formal politicians and shape the formal agenda. The fora that developed over the 1990s included organisations that were erstwhile resistant to working with the state, and this underlines how the construction of mainstream political space had changed.

A feminist academic who was central to the development of the Sub-Secretariat for women concurs: 'The feminists that are here are those who think that it is important to work with the state. To gain an institutional space for gender and not only that, but also the rule of law.' (Academic and activist, Interview, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012). The Constitution of 1991 was identified as a crucial element in changing the structures of formal politics:

Political currents other than the traditional political parties started opening up – this was facilitated by the Constitution of 1991, in which they started to propose the recognition of citizenship on the basis of identity – women, indigenous etcetera (Academic and activist, Interview, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012)

These processes represented a shift towards a collaborative, inclusive form of government, and reflected the trajectory at national level towards consolidating democratic governance, but also challenging hegemonic gendered practice in political office.

The women's movement had a prominent role in Compromiso Ciudadano, and with the establishment of the Sub-Secretariat for Women, became part of formal politics.

Having a Sub-Secretary of Women here is an unprecedented achievement because it is in the middle of a supremely conservative society with some parties that are very committed to traditional thinking about women. (Academic and activist, Interview, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012)

Whilst this in itself represents a change to the gender of formal political structures, the way that the activities of the Sub-Secretariat, and the women involved in it, were seen, illustrates how a gendered binary is recreated in the context of technocratic municipal

governance. Whilst the economic and infrastructural development projects were seen as being at city scale, the projects, such as educational programmes for community mothers, community crèches and co-operative businesses, run by the Sub-Secretariat for women were seen to be partial.

They don't understand what it's for – they think it's about charity for women  
– they cannot understand that there is a space for gender inequality within  
the theme of development. (Academic and activist, Interview, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012)

As a result, the sub-Secretariat was accused of behaving 'like an NGO', rather than a government. This was in reference to their focus on for example specific income generation projects for displaced women, that involved a limited number of beneficiaries, and long-term training and support. Such projects do not conform to the expectations of impact, and do not produce the data, that satisfies the technocratic government which mayors represent, whilst infrastructural interventions are seen as gender-neutral, citywide interventions, despite benefiting specific sections of the population.

Whilst acknowledging the changes in formal political spaces and leadership, women involved in government in Medellín during and since Fajardo's administration are very clear that, despite the establishment of the Sub-Secretariat and the entry of more women into formal politics, the exclusion of women still underpinned masculine leadership and political authority.

This society hates women in power. But it hates them in such a terrible way  
that any woman who arrives in power, or who has an attitude of  
empowerment, is badly treated. If they arrive at positions of power, women

opt for mimicking a typically masculine leadership. (Feminist politician,  
Interview, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012)

Even if they are new or different men, they are still more accustomed to a  
more masculine and brutal environment, as politics is. I think that for many  
women, it's still a very hostile world... our leadership is very masculine and  
macho, and I've had many difficulties because our men, despite the fact that  
the ones in the cabinet were great, that they're my friends and I love them  
lots, have not stopped being macho. (Member of Fajardo Administration,  
Interview, 8th August 2012)

## CONCLUSION

Sergio Fajardo's mayorship in Medellín, which exemplifies the pragmatic, managerial, locally responsive and technocratic city leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both challenged and recreated the gendered construction of political power. Within the city itself, Fajardo's image as leader contrasted starkly with previous mayors, including Alvaro Uribe, who used the force of the state to quell violence in marginalised areas of the city, including the legalisation of paramilitary activity. However, Fajardo's ability to adopt this technocratic, non-violent approach is to an extent dependent on violent intervention, and technocratic expertise recreates the vertical, masculine relationships associated with 'strong man' leadership. This is reflected in the comments of women politicians from the era who emphasise that, although the women's movement could find a place in formal power structures and influence the agenda, the masculinist construction of power remains and they have to deal with the individual slights of male colleagues and the trivialisation of their work.



Nevertheless, gendered power in the city changed over the period in which Compromiso Ciudadano was established and Sergio Fajardo became mayor. Collaborative, consultative and participatory forms of politics underpinned the development of the civic movement and social urbanism agenda that eventually led to Fajardo's success as mayor. Whilst a collaborative, participatory, approach to governance is constructed as feminine against the vertical norm of patronage and a monopoly on the use of force, there are complex, fluid and ambivalent dynamics involved in challenging and recreating this gendered binary. Notably, Fajardo's reconstruction as a 'hero' – reflecting the individualistic, masculine norms of leadership – is in part because he adopted an 'expert' approach which involves participation and collaboration as a technique of governance. Nevertheless, in the context of Medellín, this represented and recreated a shift in the processes of how power could be attained, retained and exercised. This was a step away from vertical, clientelist and violent political processes, and opened up political spaces that were, explicitly and by analogy, more feminine. In cultural terms, the way that his marriage and partnership with Lucrecia Ramirez was portrayed in the media, and the way that Ramirez used the role of 'First Woman', represents a challenge to the establishment of masculine power by controlling women, albeit one that recreates modern, cosmopolitan values that are related to class privilege in the international context.

The office of mayor - widely praised and critiqued for being a pragmatic, techno-managerial role – is a form of leadership that recreates the vertical power relationships of the Leviathan, but without a monopoly on the use of force. The violent context of Medellín places the progressiveness of this form of power into sharp relief, but also highlights the underlying reliance of this authority on force – in the case of Medellín, military and paramilitary. Whilst techno-managerial power can militate against the 'strong man' leadership of clientelism and populism, and can open up more horizontal,

collaborative, participatory political spaces, theoretically constructed as more 'feminine', the techno-managerial mayor, still relies on placing women in the position of constitutive other, and constructs a gender focus as partial, against the city-scale 'neutrality' of urban data. However the example of Fajardo's leadership in Medellín demonstrates the importance of seeing power not in abstract terms, or solely in terms of a focus on the office itself, but via grounding power in the discursive and structural processes that construct political space. Fajardo's leadership did indicate, perform and recreate changes in the gendered construction of power, and the complexities of this emphasise the dynamics and diverse nature of gender and power. However the social and political developments which facilitated the emergence of Medellín's techno-managerial mayor, belie the individualist heroism with which his administration is seen.

Mayors around the world are emphasising their scientific, technical or managerial backgrounds in election campaigning, and participation and collaboration are themselves part of the techno-managerial expertise that characterises urban governance. Whilst this perpetuates vertical, top down leadership, it also has the power to transform the gendered construction of political leadership more broadly, and open up spaces in which masculinist tropes of power can be challenged. However, although the development of techno-managerial leadership in response to the needs of global capital can, as is the case in Medellín, indicate and break away from violent political processes, this is not necessarily the case. Rodrigo Duterte, three-times mayor of Davao City and a contemporary of Fajardo's, espoused a techno-managerial approach to urban development, whilst vocally supported paramilitary 'death squads' (Breuil and Rozema 2009)

Nevertheless, the rise in the power of cities and their status as a focal point of 'good governance' and global capital is creating political space in which power can emerge,

depending on historical, socio-economic and cultural context, which challenges the association of political leadership with verticality and violence of classical notions of power. Theories of power that focus on leaders and their 'impact' on their surroundings can blind analyses to the changes in political process that facilitated and supported the emergence of different tropes of leadership. The implication of my analysis here for other studies of urban governance is the importance of analysing city governance as process, in which the techno-managerial policies and discourses of leadership are seen not as 'post-political', but as converging with other factors – including the relationship between gender, violence and power - that generate political space and frame how power is attained and maintained. This space is neither necessarily progressive or regressive, but can be strategised to challenge notions of how power is attained, retained and exercised, and by whom.

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